

Testimony for the SUBCOMMITTEE on HEALTH AND HOSPITALS

Good Afternoon to Co-Chairs Sen. Terry Gerratana, and Rep. Patricia Dillon, and to the Senators and Representatives of the Committee:

My name is Maryann Lombardi and I am a parent of 2 children with special needs, one diagnosed with Autism and the other with ADHD. I am a parent advocate for children with special needs and former vice chair of the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities.

When Catherine Hogan first began this program I referred a client of mine to her for the Inclusion Teaming Pilot Program. This young man was receiving a minimal amount of special education and related services in school which had proven quite ineffective and he had suffered bullying from his middle school years on. He had been rolled down a football field, smashed into lockers, had his clavicle broken, was harassed on and off the school bus, was encouraged to jump out of a tree and broke his arm, had his book bag turned inside out with all his books cascading to the floor of the high school hallway. He was harshly disciplined for joking with a teacher inappropriately. He was assaulted at summer camp where the CT State Police had to be called in.

For years this young man with High Functioning Autism was just trying to learn how to fit in. Inclusion Teaming was the right clinical program at just the right time for this young man and the missing pieces were able to be put in place, as he learned about the basic differences in social communication that existed between him and his typical peers in an atmosphere where his safety, his feelings and his integrity were protected.

With each session he demonstrated growth, building his confidence and skills, his mother was truly happy he was so fully participating. Now in his second year in college he is succeeding among his peers and has just made the Dean's list.

In contrast to this young man's success story there are so many young men and women, mostly young men who have never had the opportunity to participate in a program such as Inclusion Teaming, who sit at home. These young adults lack the skills set which would enable them to succeed at work or higher education.

Such is a young man diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, the son of a friend of mine. To his mother's frustration he sits at home, playing video games at 26 years of age, waiting for the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services to tell him what to do next. This young man and so many others could have their lives changed by having an opportunity to participate in a program such as Inclusion Teaming. This program addresses the heart of social communication challenges which hold these young people back from succeeding, such as problem solving, perspective taking and learning how to express exactly what they need and developing a mechanism for these young people to find meaningful employment.

Respectfully Submitted;

Maryann Lombardi

Wilton, CT

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